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REMARKS:

The June 4, 2004, Office action rejected claims 1-12, 16, and 21 and objected to claims 13-15, 19, 20, and 22. To expedite prosecution of this case, this Amendment and Response adds new claim 23, cancels claims 3, 6, and 10, and amends claims 1, 4, 7, 9, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 22. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of the original claims in co-pending applications. Support for the various amendments may be found in the originally filed specification, claims and figures; no new matter has been introduced. After entry of this amendment, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, and 11-23 remain pending in the application, including 7 independent claims. In view of the foregoing remarks, reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Claim rejections under 35 USC § 102(b)

In the June 4, 2004, Office action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-12, 16, 17, and 21 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Beerwald, U.S. Patent No. 771410.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, and 4 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Cameron, U.S. Patent No. 4,176,897.

The Examiner rejected claims 16 and 18 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Vu, U.S. Patent No. 6,149,446.

In the Office action, the Examiner rejected claim 1 as being anticipated by both Beerwald and Cameron.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite that the housing defines a cavity, the "cavity extending from said opening along a connection axis" and the cover being movable "along a path," the path "being generally orthogonal with respect to said connection axis, said cover having an inclined surface portion facing away from said at least one terminal to enable said mating element to push said cover from said first position to said second position."

The structure as recited in amended claim 1 is distinct over the cited references for at least the following reasons. Neither Beerwald nor Cameron nor any of the other cited references discloses, teaches or suggests an electrical connector having the limitations recited in claim 1.

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The electrical connector disclosed by Beerwald does not have a cover movable along a path which is generally **orthogonal** with respect to a connection axis.

The electrical connector disclosed by Cameron on Fig. 10 does not have an **inclined surface portion** facing away from at least one terminal to enable the mating element to push the cover from a first position to a second position. On Fig. 10, Cameron discloses a cover which is controlled by an actuator motor. Accordingly, the cover of Fig. 10 does not have an inclined surface portion facing away from at least one terminal to enable a mating element to push the cover.

None of the electrical connectors disclosed by Cameron on Figs. 2, 5, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12 have a cover which is slidably retained by a housing. On Figs. 2, 5, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, and 8, Cameron discloses a cover which is pivotably mounted to a housing. On Figs. 11 and 12, Cameron discloses a cover which is rotatably mounted to a housing.

In the Office action, the Examiner rejected claim 9 as being anticipated by Beerwald.

Applicants have amended claim 9 to recite that the second connector member is "mateable with said first connector member along a connection axis," the cover moves "along a path" from the first position toward the second position, and "said path extending generally perpendicular in relation to said connection axis." This amendment finds full support in the originally filed claims, specification, or drawings as filed.

The structure as recited in amended claim 9 is distinct over the cited references for at least the following reasons. Neither Beerwald nor any of the other cited references discloses, teaches or suggests an electrical connector comprising a cover that moves along a path extending generally **perpendicular** in relation to a connection axis together with the other limitations as recited in claim 9.

In the Office action, the Examiner rejected claim 16 as being anticipated by both Beerwald and Vu.

Applicants have amended claim 16 to recite that "said first housing comprising a first alignment feature," ... "said second housing comprising a second alignment feature engageable with said first alignment feature to bring said first and second connector members into alignment when said first and second connector members are advanced toward each other for mating," ... "wherein when said cover is located at a first position said cover

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extends across said opening to generally cover said opening." This amendment finds full support in the originally filed claims, specification, or drawings as filed.

The structure as recited in amended claim 16 is distinct over the cited references for at least the following reasons. Neither Beerwald nor Vu nor any of the other cited references discloses, teaches or suggests an electrical connector having the limitations recited in claim 16.

The electrical connector disclosed by Beerwald does not have a cover which extends across an opening. The electrical connector disclosed by Vu does not have first and second housings in which both housings comprise an alignment feature.

Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1, 9, and 16 under 35 USC §102(b) is not proper, and claims 1, 9, and 16 are allowable. Moreover, since claims 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 depend from claim 1, and since claim 1 is allowable for at least the reasons set forth above, dependent claims 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are also allowable. Further, since claims 11 and 12 depend from claim 9, and since claim 9 is allowable for the reasons set forth above, dependent claims 11 and 12 are also allowable. Finally, since claims 17, 18, and 21 depend from claim 16, and since claim 16 is allowable for the reasons set forth above, dependent claims 17, 18, and 21 are also allowable. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 11, 12, 16-18, and 21 are requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the June 4, 2004, Office action, the Examiner objected to claims 13-15, 19-20, and 22 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

This is noted with appreciation.

Claim 13 had been amended to place it in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims from which claim 13 formerly depended. Claims 14 and 15 depend on claim 13 and are now in allowable form.

Claim 19 had been amended to place it in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims from which claim 19 formerly depended. Claim 20 depends on claim 19 and is now in allowable form.

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Claim 22 had been amended to place it in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims from which claim 22 formerly depended.

Applicants respectfully request allowance of newly independent claims 13, 19, and 22 and claims 14, 15, and 20 which depend therefrom.

Prior Art

Applicants have reviewed the cited prior art. None of the references, either alone or in combination, discloses, teaches, or suggests Applicants' claimed invention.

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CONCLUSION

Claims 13-15, 19, 20, and 22, indicated by the Examiner to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, have been amended to place them in allowable form. Applicants request the withdrawal of the objections to claims 13-15, 19, 20, and 22.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants request the withdrawal of the rejections to claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 11, 12, 16-18, and 21. All of the pending claims fully comply with 35 U.S.C. §112 and are allowable over the prior art of record.

Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all pending claims is earnestly solicited. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and allow claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, and 11-22 and pass the case to issue. Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above in greater detail or deem that further amendments should be made to improve the form of the claims, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience.

Please charge any necessary fees, including any extension of time, or any other fee deficiencies to Delphi Technologies, Inc., Deposit Account No. 50-0831.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

David P. Wood
Registration No: 45,932
Attorney for Applicants
Phone No. 248-813-1202
Fax No. 248-813-1222